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THE PRESENT STATUS OF SOCIOLOGY IN GERMANY.

I.

THE official guardians of science in Germany have not yet brought themselves to grant sociology equal rights with other sciences. It is well known that sociology is not native to German soil. It was imported in the first instance from France and then from England. It is, consequently, to the present day regarded as an alien. Official recognition is so far refused that in Professor Conrad's *Staatswörterbuch* the article "Sociology" is entirely lacking. German professors of philosophy and political science ignore sociology entirely, and whatever is done within this territory, either on the continent or on the other side of the channel, is hardly taken seriously here. On account of a fatal association of ideas the German professor joins sociology so closely with the names of Comte and Spencer that he is obliged to repudiate it utterly, by as much as he denies to the theories of these thinkers the rank of science.

While rejection of sociology may be partially accounted for by its alien birth, and jealousy about admitting it to equality with "autochthonous" sciences, nevertheless the admission cannot be avoided that the fault is to be charged in very large measure to sociology itself, because of the form which it has assumed. At the present day, when specialization is carried to the minutest detail, if a science is to maintain its existence, it must in the first place be able sharply to define its territory, and thus, in a certain measure, demonstrate its right to exist. In fact, sociology, as represented by Comte and Spencer, claims to be nothing less than universal science. In that case, what is not included in sociology? With the exception of a few special branches of natural science, sociology would include every department of human investigation which has anything to do with the psychical sciences. In this case sociology is merely

another name for metaphysics—and of that Germany has had already enough.

If, then, sociology is to make a place for itself as a science in the complete sense of the term, it must mark off its territory, it must define the complex of phenomena which it attempts to bring under general conceptions. Within the vast circle of the psychical sciences sociology must announce precisely the section which it proposes to cultivate—so far as it is possible in the psychical sciences to give a precise account of method or of material.

I assign to sociology as a science *the phenomena of the formation of social groups*. Sociology is, accordingly, not the theory of *society*, merely, but rather of *socialization*.

Sociology in this view has a dual task, a formal or descriptive, and a normative or ætiological. In the first place it is the task of sociology to investigate socialization with respect to its forms. The mere facts must be registered and brought under general rubrics. The more dignified task, on the other hand, and that which is properly scientific, is to investigate and declare the psychical motivation of association. We have before us, for example, the historical fact of a *crusade*. In pragmatic research and representation the historian has given us the pertinent details. He has pictured the separate factors—peoples, knights, clergy, and so forth. He has completed his task as historian by giving us a picture of the prevailing culture of the times, of the moving ideas and ideals. Now comes the sociologist, and to him a new problem presents itself. Before him is the fact that many peoples combined, “associated,” or “socialized” themselves for the conduct of a war. In what relation did the associated peoples stand to each other? Assuming that his researches yield him the result that the peoples concerned stood to each other in the relation of superiority and subordination, the sociologist in question has thereby solved one portion of his problem. That is, he has found the *form* in which socialization proceeded toward a given purpose. Now arises, however, the further question: What impelled these peoples, who, under other

circumstances, would have fought each other, to association? The common purpose to rescue the Holy Sepulchre. This common purpose had its source in a common will, which, in turn, in the case before us, is determined by common religious conceptions. Thus, in the last analysis, religious conceptions and feelings are the psychical motivation of this association. Herewith is a considerable portion of the task of sociology performed in outline. It is no concern of sociology what significance this occurrence had for the development of European civilization; that it resulted in establishing the hegemony of one state over another; that it made Europe acquainted with Arabian-Greek philosophy, and in consequence philosophical thought was led into unwonted paths; or that new vistas were opened to art by contact with the Orient. All this and much more belongs outside the frame of sociology. In like manner sociology will not extend its investigations to the economic circumstances and conditions which were grounds for this undertaking, or which followed upon it; what forms and dimensions the taxes assumed which were levied for this purpose; how this taxation affected the further tax system, and so forth. All this is to be investigated by the historian of national economics.

Another example may be cited. Suppose a stock company is formed. Economic science has taught us the conditions, circumstances, and foundations under and upon which stock companies may and should be established. They are of no further interest to sociology, any more than are the questions whether the company has much or little prospect of profit, whether it proposes to establish a textile factory or to work a gold mine. Sociology is content with the fact of the formation of a society, and inquires in the first instance merely after the relations of the members among themselves. If it is a voluntary association the members stand to each other in the relation of coördination. Their association is essentially impersonal. The capital alone is bound to it, and the relations of the members to each other grow out of their common property right in the active capital. There consequently results a whole complex of forms and diversified

relations, which it is the business of sociology to determine and to trace back as distinctly as possible to fundamental forms and types. Now appears the question with reference to the motivation of this association. The answer will be, for example, the certainty of competition, the desire to economize the labor power, and finally desire for wealth and the increase of wealth. Herewith sociology has entirely accomplished its task.

From the foregoing we derive, then, the following definition of sociology: *Sociology is the science of the forms and the psychical motivation of human association.* The material of sociology is derived from the results of all the psychical sciences, since the phenomena of association are considered by all these, and are of fundamental significance. Nevertheless sociology is by no means on this account compelled to give up its character as an independent science, and to be rated merely as an eclectic method.

The conception of sociology as a special science developed above corresponds in essentials with the view represented by G. Simmel.¹ Nevertheless there is still a considerable difference between the two views. Simmel lays the chief weight upon the former portion of the task, that is, upon the formal side, while I emphasize chiefly the second part, namely, the psychical motivation. Simmel fortifies his conception with the analogy of geometry: "Thus, geometry contemplates merely the spatial form of bodies, which has no existence by itself, but only with and as a part of a substance, the investigation of which belongs to other sciences." This comparison is misleading and is not strictly appropriate to sociology. The contents of geometrical figures, that is, the substances so shaped, are in fact entirely irrelevant for geometry, because abstraction from them is easily made. Whether the cylinder is of wood or glass or iron is never taken into consideration in reckoning its spatial relations and its dimensions. In the case of sociology, on the contrary, it is a matter of very great importance who brings associations into

¹"Das Problem der Soziologie," in SCHMOLLER'S *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung*, u. s. w., 1894.

existence. The determination of societary forms depends essentially upon whether, for example, children come together for play, or the members of a primitive village community are the persons in question, or the case in hand is that of persons upon an advanced plane of culture, forming a political party held together by an elaborately thought-out social programme. In the sociological form the element of consciousness is manifest, and this relates sociology unequivocally to psychology.

Moreover it is not feasible to treat forms of association in complete abstraction from their content. As a matter of fact, Simmel himself, in his own sociological investigations, by no means conceives the problem in a purely formal way. On the contrary his strength is in profound and acute psychological interpretations. In the monograph already cited psychology comes at last to its rights. Psychology is involved in the definition. Simmel defines sociology as "the investigation of the *forces*, forms, and developments of socialization." That is, when we examine the definition closely it is precisely what I mean by *psychical motivation*. The "forces of socialization" are none other than psychical forces, and the investigation of them is psychological investigation; not properly individual psychology, to be sure, but rather social psychology.

On the other hand, Simmel represents this part of sociological procedure merely as a methodological point of view. He says "the methods according to which the problems of socialization are investigated are the same as in all comparative psychological sciences." We may grant that certain primary presumptions of individual psychology are to be understood in sociology primarily only as methodological conditions; social psychology, however, is not to be entirely separated in its substance from sociology; it is rather by far the most important constituent of sociology. Sociology can only regard its task as performed when it has discovered the psychical motivation of the phenomena of association.

Too broad and, therefore, too inexact is the definition of sociology given by Ferdinand Tönnies (*Jahresbericht über die*

Erscheinungen auf dem Gebiete der systematischen Philosophie). In his opinion sociology is identical with social philosophy. This appears in the following: "Every science is philosophy, on the one hand in its general projections, on the other hand in its practical importance; that is, in its ethical and political significance." The idea seems to be too loosely conceived. The results of sociology are, to be sure, the foundation for ethical and political science or activity. They are not, however, ethics and political science themselves. The "general projections" of sociology are, to be sure, basal elements for social philosophy, but they are not on that account social philosophy itself. The latter builds in the air if it does not use the results of sociology for its foundation. Sociology loses itself in intangible generalities if it poses as a completed system of social philosophy. The domain of sociology is narrow and more exact than that of social philosophy, which, like every philosophy, is an extract from sciences, not, however, science itself.

With this delimitation of the field of sociological research we have drawn the boundaries for the task of this paper. Our purpose accordingly is to treat here only the specifically sociological. We shall not refer to the technical economic sciences, nor to experimental social politics. In so far, however, as sociology on the one hand has its source in history, and on the other hand flows into social philosophy, will it be necessary to treat here certain fundamental problems of historical philosophy, and the most recent tendencies in social philosophy.

It is a most peculiar situation, such as should seldom occur in the history of the sciences, that the question, historical materialism or idealism, has become a party issue between the historians of the conservative (*bürgerlich*) element and those of social-democratic affiliations. At all events it is eagerly represented in this way on the social-democratic side. Thus Franz Mehring says, for example :¹ "Historical idealism, in its various

¹"Ueber den historischen Materialismus" (Anhang zu *Die Lessing-Legende*, Stuttgart, 1893).

theological, rationalistic, and also naturalistic phases, is the historical conception of the burgher class, while historical materialism is the preconception of the working class" (p. 500). As matter of fact, the burgher historians tend to be very shy of historical materialism, while those who call themselves socialists feel themselves in duty bound to justify historical materialism, to investigate only from its point of view, even at the cost of turning the facts upside down. For a person of somewhat delicate sensibility it is inordinately disgusting to see a purely theoretical question treated from the standpoint of a political party. The circumstance that Karl Marx was the author of this theory cannot be a sufficient ground in the minds of the upright scientific investigator for rejecting it without further thought, nor, on the other hand, for establishing it as a dictum to which, according to the party programme, unlimited obedience must be paid. Philosophical theorems are more changeable and flexible than party programmes; they also give rise to less hatred and bitterness. Historical materialism derived an impulse, as is well known, from Marx, although he nowhere formulated it as a systematic theory. We find it scattered in his various writings, and we distinguish it as a sort of undertone in all his assertions. Only once is the fundamental proposition of this theory plainly spoken out. In the *Kritik der polit. Oekonomie*, Preface, he says: "The method of production of the material life determines the social, political, and spiritual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of man that determines his being, but his social existence determines his consciousness."

According to this formula we have a key which explains the most complicated historical events. Suppose we have before us, for example, the "Renaissance." Nothing is easier than to understand it. We need only to know the economic relations of the time, which is not so very difficult. We need only to figure out how many loaves of bread and pounds of meat per year and per capita the men of the Renaissance had to divide among themselves—something that with a little trouble may easily be discovered, as M. Taine did it for the time preceding

the French Revolution—and we have it explained why in this period Aristotle was superseded by Plato, why Raphael and Michael Angelo put in their appearance just at this time, why—in a word—all the countless questions which present themselves to the historian in connection with this tremendous spiritual revolution resolve themselves into more or less difficult examples in arithmetic, all of which work out without a remainder.

And now comes the application which the moderns, Mehring, for example, have given to this play on words, "It is not consciousness that determines the mode of existence, but the mode of existence determines consciousness." In the monograph above cited this latest champion of historical materialism in Germany says: "Precisely the assumption that men are led to eat, drink, and lodge by thought, that by philosophy they are brought to economy, is demonstrably the most arbitrary of premises, and accordingly historical idealism leads to the most miraculous historical combinations" (p. 476). The implication is that the reverse is correct; namely, that through eating, drinking, and lodging men come to thought, through economy they come to philosophy.

The absurdity of this proposition is too evident to require proof. It rests, however, primarily upon the fact that Mehring and the other materialistic historians do not make perfectly clear the notion with which the proposition is concerned. Most assuredly, if it should be asserted that human beings first think and afterwards eat, the meaning being that systematic thought precedes eating, there would be little need of profound speculation to make this view ridiculous. But nobody has ever indulged in such an assertion; no more has anybody asserted that philosophy precedes economy; as a department of literature, philosophy is antecedent, to be sure, but not as a historic social fact.

The thing in point therefore, in the first place, is to determine what is here understood by eating, drinking, and lodging on the one hand, and by thinking on the other. We may

easily conceive of the eating of grass or of wild fruits, of the drinking of water and of lodging in caves without thought—that is, without processes of reasoning with abstract conceptions and ideas. For all this animal instinct, unconscious impulse of self-preservation, is abundantly sufficient. If, however, men eat bread, and drink wine, and live in houses, there must surely have preceded an amount of intensive thought, a process of observation and reflection through a long series of generations; all of which prepared and founded the conditions of complex and purposeful production. Here materialism is of no avail. Thought cannot be eliminated from this process of foundation, any more than it has permitted itself to be supplanted in psychology by philosophical materialism.

The analogy is not far fetched. It has also been attempted to reduce psychology to physiology. Psychical phenomena have been regarded as physiological manifestations, and it has been attempted to confirm this hypothesis by experiments. Nobody has observed, and nobody will observe “how matter thinks;” and from the ranks of the physiologists one of the most eminent has proclaimed, with less world-woe (*Weltschmerz*), it must be confessed, than with complacent defiance, *ignorabimus!*

The “psyche” has not permitted itself to be driven out of psychology, and no human eye has been able to penetrate to the “psyche,” no matter how fine the glasses with which it was armed. The same fate awaits also historical materialism—the latest messenger of metaphysical materialism. It will go to pieces because it will never succeed in adducing proof of its declaration that material conditions causally determine spiritual conditions.

As though they anticipate this fortune, the historical materialists contend against acknowledging their derivation from the metaphysician. Thus Mehring declares that *philosophical* materialism regards man merely as an animal; “Historical materialism on the contrary starts with the fact of natural science that man is not an animal merely, but a *social* animal, that he arrives at consciousness only in the community of social combinations

(horde, gens, class) and can live as a conscious being only in them; that *in this way* the material bases of these combinations determine his ideal consciousness, and their progressive development exhibits the advancing principle of progress in humanity" (p. 446). Notice particularly this "in this way," and mark the fallacy. This is precisely the question involved; whether the material conditions have a temporal and logical priority or not. If the former is asserted, we have materialism, bare and raw and unproved, as it has occurred very often in the history of philosophy. It is precisely the same thought when one says, "Stimuli of such and such character upon the brain substance are or produce thought," as when it is said that the material bases and movements of society beget its ideas and ideals. If we have once reached the correct perception that in the former case there can be no assertion of a causal nexus, because it cannot be discovered and proved, we have thereby removed the ground for the subsequent assertion, and the old sciolism about the "social animal" can no longer be of the least assistance.

The only reconciliation to be reached, and the only logically admissible alternative, is a sort of parallelism. This is again the path over which psychology has gone. That certain stimuli of the brain substance produce movements contemporaneous with thought, that these movements and the thought perhaps stand in functional relationship with each other, may be asserted with perfect logical propriety; likewise that certain correlations of the material conditions of society appear contemporaneously with given psychical conditions. This relation is to be asserted, however, only hypothetically and as a proposed principle of interpretation. Such an application of the theory would be not only a serviceable methodological guide, but its content would have actual justification and positive foundation. That historical materialism is merely a serviceable methodological view point dawns upon its champions from time to time. But even in these moments of illumination they overdo the matter in another way. Thus Mehring says: "Historical materialism is no closed and final system of truth, it is only the

scientific method of investigating the process of human development" (p. 450). I am quite ready to let it pass as such. I deny, however, most emphatically that it is entitled to the exclusive character which it claims. It is not *the* scientific method *par excellence*, but *a* scientific method. From the standpoint of the parallelism just referred to, we must hold both materialism and idealism to be one-sided, and thus insufficient. If the history of the process of human development is to be composed into a stereoscopic picture, we must bring both sides into the field of vision and investigate both with equal precision, instead of promoting the one to the rank of cause and degrading the other to the rank of effect.

This, however, is by no means what is done. Thus K. Kautsky, in his *Entstehung des Christentums*,¹ attempts to prove "that the history of classic antiquity is nothing else than the history of the crowding out of communism by private property." Well said, "nothing else!" And in the same spirit Mehring declares, with a definiteness that leaves nothing to be wished: "The human mind is not over but in the historical development of human society; it has grown from, upon and with, material production." (*Er ist aus, an, und mit der materiellen Produktion erwachsen*, p. 451). This is more than a mere method of research; this is a definitive theorem, and more than that, a fundamentally false one. This "grows from" is here simply smuggled into the presumption, as though it were not precisely the thing which remains to be proved.

Whether the so-called ideological motives, to use the awkward current terminology, produce the material structure of society or *vice versa*, is just the question in dispute. As was remarked above, this question cannot be settled by an *ex parte* answer. But idealism falls into an error precisely identical with that of materialism. Thus Paul Barth,² when, in attempting to refute historical materialism, he cites the illustration of the rela-

¹ *Neue Zeit*, III, 11, 12, 1885.

² *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Hegels und der Hegelianer bis auf Marx und Hartmann*, Leipzig, 1890.

tion between the Osmanlis and the Maygars, says: "Christianity, attributing higher value to spiritual forces, spurred the Magyars to higher intellectual development, while Islam, having a smaller spiritual content, made the Osmanlis incapable of competition with Christian people" (p. 57). This assertion is historically incorrect and methodologically false. It is in the first place untrue that Christianity attributes higher value than Islam to spiritual forces. With quite as much authority we might assert the contrary. More than that, it is a decided mistake to attempt to explain the entire complexity of the history involved by the one factor of religion. We may easily name numerous Christian peoples who have been under the same religious influence and have still not succeeded in reaching any remarkable degree of culture, either in material or in spiritual respects. That the spiritual content of Christianity promotes and encourages material culture is by no means an impregnable fact as Barth seems to assume. Spanish Catholicism with its highly spiritual content, for example,—the Inquisition and the *auto da fé*,—may be mentioned in qualification. Barth here employs an hypothesis quite as unfounded and unscientific as that of Mehring and Kautsky, when they declare that the rise and progress of Christianity was determined only by the devastating and pauperizing *latifundia* in ancient Rome. This is leaning altogether too much to one side. Such hypotheses, in attempting to explain everything finally, as a rule explain nothing.

According to the foregoing explanation historical materialism reduces to a mere method of investigation, but even in this relation it is far from being all that is necessary; we can by no means allow that it is a comprehensive, well-grounded philosophy of history. A philosophy of history in a comprehensive sense is still in Germany, and elsewhere as well, a demand upon thinkers. A very important attempt to lay the basis of such a philosophy has been made by Georg Simmel.¹ The thing which has been most evidently lacking in the philosophy of history and in thought upon social problems in general is a turn-

¹ *Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Berlin, 1892.

ing of the power of cognition to consideration of itself—a critique and a theory of knowledge. For natural philosophy Kant elaborated the categories which we read into experience, and with the help of which experience becomes possible and intelligible. Simmel makes the attempt to demonstrate in the case of historical experience, and for the knowledge of historical occurrences, the same *a priori* element, which must be given as presumption or major premise in order that understanding and explanation of the historical occurrences, as minor premise, may be possible.

Historical comprehension is nothing else than the reproduction in the mind of the investigator of the psychical conditions fundamental to the historical occurrences. If it were impossible for us to reproduce in ourselves the psychical processes of all historical actors, history would be for us not merely uninteresting but totally incomprehensible. "If there were such a thing," says Simmel, "as a psychology as the science of law, historical science would then be applied psychology, in the same sense in which astronomy is applied mathematics" (p. 2).

In overcoming these difficulties of historical interpretation crass historical materialism is of no assistance. So long as the search is for an explanation of historical occurrences it will be essential for the historian to transport himself, so to speak, into the psychical conditions of the persons or groups whom he depicts. We may add that historical materialism not only does not remove this difficulty in cognitive theory, but rather increases and complicates it. That is, if we assume only one kind of motivation for historical acts and occurrences, as the self-sufficient and universally applicable interpretation, we at last completely defeat comprehension of history. It is not to be denied that historical materialism, with its stereotyped monism and its soulless barrenness, is much less able to sustain criticism than its counterpart idealism, with its abundance of psychical motives and view points.

A further serious difficulty is exposed by a critique of the method of historical knowledge, in the perception that the his-

torical investigator is in danger of interpreting known psychical motives into the phenomena where, it may be, only undetermined motives are manifest; and also the reverse of this process is possible. This is the more important since even in daily observation the boundaries between known and unknown run into each other, and, moreover, what was at first consciously done falls gradually by long practice beneath the threshold of consciousness, whence it still operates by way of limitation and impulse. These two critical requirements are urged by Simmel upon historiography: subjective reproduction by the historian of the unfamiliar psychical conditions; and the obscure, perhaps inevitably obscure, relation between the known and the unknown psychical motives operating in the circumstances studied.

So much for the critique of knowledge. But how about the theory of knowledge? Simmel has not proposed one. He offers only suggestions in that direction, and shows the way that the theory must necessarily take. He even doubts whether it is possible to reach a solution of the problems of cognitive theory which he has proposed. Thus he says with reference to the first point here raised: "This feeling of something which I still do not really feel, this reconstruction of a subjectivity which is again a subjectivity, but at the same time stands objectively over against the former—*that is the riddle of historical cognition, for the understanding of which our logical and psychological categories are still much too clumsy instruments*" (p. 16).

Nevertheless he attempts to solve this riddle to some extent by a very bold hypothesis. He refers this power of understanding psychical conditions long since experienced to a sort of inheritance. He says in this connection, among other things: "In order to regard this vast domain of comprehension of psychical occurrences not experienced by ourselves as not wholly miraculous, we may consider such intelligence as a kind of consciousness of latent inheritances" (p. 25). This hypothesis would seem to suffice in explanation merely of normal psychical occurrences. Only that which is general and average is usually perpetuated by heredity and propagation. If we have

to do, however, with heroic, or, so to speak, idealized historical personalities, this inheritance hypothesis will only add to our difficulties. The fundamental motive, and the whole mental *habitus* of these supreme representatives—these heroes of crime and virtue—surely did not perpetuate itself by inheritance. When, nevertheless, we understand a Cæsar Borgia, or a Socrates, which we do by reconstruction of their psychic condition, since, as Simmel very rightly claims, there is no other possible way of comprehension, this riddle surely rises to the rank of a miracle. Simmel, however, does not seem to press this thought seriously; he throws it out simply as a conceit which makes no claim to scientific, still less to fundamental, significance.

No more has Simmel spoken a final word with reference to the relations between known and unknown motives in historical interpretation. He is content at this point with calling attention to the problem, and with showing the way which the investigation must take. "A philosophy of history," says he, "should undertake to determine in what cases the historical writer, led by instinct or by reflection, abstracted from the known utilities in the actions of men; it should discover when we must suppose that conscious volition and thought formed the basis of a given occurrence, and when we must abandon such an hypothesis" (p. 13). As method for this investigation Simmel announces empiricism: "The assumption that there was consciousness or unconsciousness behind given physical acts is to be established by enquiring of the historical conceptions, not as they should be, but as they actually were" (p. 14). Whether this path will really lead to the goal must remain undecided. There is room for a good deal of doubt, since in respect to this point the historians themselves, according to their view of the world in general, differ widely from each other. And consequently "historical conceptions as they actually were" are very difficult to determine. A Buckle would surely be inclined to see unknown powers and inevitable natural laws in operation, where a Mommsen would find conscious acts of will.

At all events we may confidently assume that a thinker of the rank of Simmel cannot have failed to perceive how difficult, how almost impossible, is the problem which he has formulated. Psychology is still far from ability to show with sufficient exactness the relation in any case between known and unknown psychical factors. Daily experience shows us that, even in the case of a given concrete occurrence, the actors in which stand before us, it is by no means always possible to prove either conscious or unconscious agency. Countless examples are furnished by the criminal courts, where accountability and consciousness are practically identical ideas. How much more difficult is this then in the case of historical persons and actions. It is the more to be regretted that, in addition to proposing the problems, Simmel did not attempt to indicate their solutions, or at least the points of view, not merely methodological, but also concrete, according to which solutions may be found.

Nevertheless the positive results of Simmel's investigations in this province are still very significant. So far as I know Simmel has here for the first time clearly spoken out the thought that the Kantian principle, according to which the thinker construes experience with his own forms of conception and reflection, is applicable to the psychical sciences, and particularly to history. Here, also, there is an *a priori*, and indeed a richer and more complete one than in the case of natural science, since the *a priori* with which we are now concerned is the whole *ego* of the investigator. "*Psychology is the a priori of historical science*" (p. 33).

This pregnant thought seems to me to render impossible for all time all sorts of naïve objectivism in historical investigation. The historians who emphasize the value of being *impersonal* will never write interesting and intelligible history. Only the chronicler can be "impersonal," and he only to a certain degree. Whoever seeks on the contrary a reasonable and intelligible unity, a correlation in history which may be scientifically comprehended, must in the first place live history over again in order to be able to narrate it. This does not cause historical

research to abandon its objective character any more than the Kantian principle eliminates objectivity from natural science. Reality is no less real from the fact that we grasp it and organize it into unity with our powers of comprehension. Both nature and history are *to us* actual, and they stand over against *us* as objective existences, because *we* recognize them as actual and objective.

Historical materialism will be least of all able to withstand the criticism of knowledge which Simmel proposes. Its fate will be like that of metaphysical materialism under the bludgeon blows of the Kantian criticism. That materialism which in history derives men from conditions, and conditions from conditions, is least of all competent to comprehend history, because it does not approach the investigation of history with the whole equipment of psychology. Let us cite for example the point of view of Marx. With him, as we remarked above, consciousness does not determine our being (*das Sein*), but our being determines consciousness. Very slight reflection will show that upon this assumption historical investigation must become a mere chimera. With our consciousness we must comprehend the consciousness of factors that have manifested themselves in history. That is the task of historical research. Now it is incomprehensible that we, with our consciousness produced by our own present "being," which is different from the "being" of the earlier time in question, can understand the consciousness of historical persons and groups.

The history of humanity must be humanly explained; that is psychologically. The only tool which we possess for this explanation is our "psyche," and it is an absolutely essential presumption that in this explanatory instrument we have the same categories, fundamental forces, and impulses, which existed in historical people. If we repudiate this presumption, however, our own soul is no longer the mirror in which the psychological conditions of historical people are reflected, and history consequently ceases to have for us interest and life.

In the second chapter of the above mentioned book, entitled

"On Historical Laws," Simmel occupies essentially, as in the first chapter, the Kantian standpoint. In this case, again, the question is not so much with reference to a positive theory as with reference to a critique of knowledge. He exposes in the first place the difficulties which the attempt to establish historical laws encounters. This chapter, full of suggestive and fruitful thought, may be briefly summarized as follows: In historiography we are usually accustomed to discriminate normative science from pure narrative. The former is, as a rule, considered the domain of historical philosophy, whose business it is to investigate the laws of historical events and to formulate them, while narrative history is concerned with the mere discovery and registration of the facts. But this discrimination is by no means founded in the nature of the subject. Upon closer examination it will appear that the so-called historical laws are really nothing else than the demonstration of facts, of such facts to be sure as have occurred so and so frequently. The frequent repetition cannot in itself be regarded as a criterion of regularity. Law involves the claim of applicability always and everywhere, and precisely this is not demonstrated in concrete historical occurrences.

Still further: natural law posits any given phenomenon behind which a force is hidden, as cause, from which some other phenomenon must necessarily follow; in history, on the contrary, we see only effects and infer from them producing causes. This kind of conclusion produces in itself no full and complete certainty and is highly unfit to establish "laws." To this must be added that in nature the relation between cause and effect is much simpler and more immediate than in history, where the phenomena are invariably results of various causes in conjunction, and on that account are by no means to be derived each from a single natural law (p. 45). Summing up all this the conclusion is that "historical laws" can by no means reach the rank of knowledge that is complete and secure against all criticisms. At the same time this is not to deny to them all value as knowledge. Their value consists rather in this, that the formulation of historical

laws in the present state of the historical sciences is a preparation for more exact research. Such is and has been the case with all sciences. "Metaphysics" first furnishes general theorems and principles, which do not touch the individual case but rather, as preliminary combinations of the typical phenomena, orient and promote research. The historiography of our time is in this stage of preparation, and "historical laws" are its metaphysic, from which science is called to proceed toward greater exactness. In this sense Simmel understands the generally current principle that the formulation of laws is the task of the philosophy of history.

I must admit that I neither feel the same objections to "historical laws" which Simmel raises, nor am I entirely satisfied with the result at which his investigations arrive. In the first place I cannot see that historical laws are in so much worse plight than natural laws. All uncertainty which attaches itself to historical laws is also the lot of natural laws, yes of all causality. The only escape from the confusion of Hume's theory of knowledge is after all Kant's idea that we import causality into things. *We* are entitled to the conclusion *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Now every law reduces finally to a causal relation. This is so according to Simmel's definition, which regards a law as a "formula in accordance with which the appearance of certain facts necessarily—that is always and everywhere—has the appearance of certain other facts for a consequence" (p. 34). This is simply another way of expressing the demonstration that A and B stand to each other in a causal connection.

The parenthetic "always and everywhere" should by no means frighten us, because it always presupposes that the cause operates freely without any interference whatever. The physical law of the "free fall, for example, is merely an abstraction, because it applies only under the supposition of a vacuum, which we have really never observed. Every natural law reckons with obstructions and interferences and must consequently be formulated with many "ifs." Historical laws are similar abstractions

in the formulation of condition, and the greater or less complexity or variation of the individual case from the rule is no impeachment of their theoretical validity.

Nor can it be so serious a matter for historiography that historical laws are derived by inference from the effect to the cause. The same thing would be primarily the case with the student of natural science. Newton sees the apple fall to the ground—that is an effect, and he refers it to gravitation, that is to the cause.

Simmel does not directly emphasize the peculiar advantage of natural science, namely, experiment. Science can produce the cause and can directly observe the emergence of the effect from it. It goes without saying that this is an advantage which cannot be too highly estimated. It might, however, be said that there is some compensation for this advantage in the psychical sciences, inasmuch as the observer can reproduce in himself various psychic conditions which are regarded as causes. This is also a sort of experiment, though somewhat less reliable.

Nor can I with Simmel regard normative history, even as it is today written, merely as a preparatory and transitional stage like metaphysics. In my judgment the metaphysical stage in history is already passed. It lasted so long as men assumed divine Providence as the one principle from which to derive all historical occurrences. Since, however, in recent times we call in the various sciences such as ethnology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and so forth, to explain separate facts as well as the totality of historical evolution, historiography may with right claim a high degree of exactitude, in spite of all theoretical difficulties which are in reality common to all departments of knowledge.

I admit, to be sure, that in this connection historical materialism is a return to metaphysics, in the sense that it erects a single invariable principle from which all history is made to proceed. That materialism has quite as much metaphysics in it as idealism has been long understood. So far as the theory of knowledge is concerned it is a matter of entire indifference whether divine

Providence or material conditions be anthropomorphized as the factors exclusively operating in history. A philosophy of history which is either materialistic or idealistic will be judged by a critique of knowledge in precisely the same way as the corresponding systems of natural philosophy. The very dilemma—materialism or idealism—savours of metaphysics; that is, the metaphysical character of present-day historiography is not the fault of the “historical laws,” but it comes from the principles from which they are derived, from the monism in which it is attempted to make them converge.

This judgment applies also to the latest attempt of Rudolf Staummler to found a philosophy of history upon the basis of idealism.¹

Staummler's book, the size of which is out of all proportion to its contents, starts from the standpoint of historical materialism. This philosophy, says Staummler, makes the rightful attempt to comprehend social life monistically. “Its principle takes this direction: that the whole of the social life of men is a unity to be scientifically understood according to mechanical laws” (p. 72). To which we reply that if the proposed aim is worth choosing the way selected by materialism does not lead to it.

The fundamental principle of historical materialism—that economics is the basis upon which law erects itself as superstructure—is false. Economics and law are inseparably connected with each other, like substance and form. “Social life is externally regulated association of human beings” (p. 90). This external regulation—law—is the *form* of social life, the *substance* of which is “human coöperation direction toward the satisfaction of desire” (p. 137). Karl Marx's picture of the foundation and the superstructure is consequently faulty. We can speak of economy in the social sense only when it is carried on under a certain legal order. Nowhere does the one stand above the other, nor is the one produced by the other. That a

¹ *Wirtschaft und Recht, nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung*. Eine sozialphilosophische Untersuchung, Leipzig, 1896.

technical modification in economics requires a modification in the legal order is regarded by Staummler as an erroneous conclusion. On the contrary, technical invention and improvements can get a definite character and be applied in economics only in accordance with the legal order which anticipates it. Consequently not "material" economics but "ideal" law is, so to speak, the *Ding an sich* of social life.

The social materialist finds a "social conflict" wherever law and economics come into opposition. In Staummler's view "a social conflict is in existence when the social phenomena that occur in a human community oppose the final purpose of the law under which the community lives" (p. 411). This final purpose is "the community of free-willing men," by which term is to be understood men "willing general purposes."

Staummler's style is so diffuse and obscure that it is extremely difficult to shell out the real kernel of his doctrine. This much, however, is clear, that Staummler wants to found a monistic system of historical philosophy along the lines of idealism. The ethical ideal is the fundamental force which produces the development of human history, and toward the highest possible realization of which history tends. Nothing but warmed-over metaphysics! In the criticism, however, which Staummler aims at historical materialism he has almost invariably been correct. He says very truly that the historical materialist "in strict logical consistency must deny the existence of social life in its essential peculiarity" (p. 453). If social life is entirely under mechanical laws it is both impossible and unnecessary for social scientists to create for themselves a peculiar domain.¹

DR. O. THON.

BERLIN, GERMANY.

¹ Translated by ALBION W. SMALL.

(To be continued.)